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TITLE: HIV Community Planning Partnerships Strengthening: Consumer/Provider Linkages in Changing Times

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ISSUES: HIV/AIDS health and human services community planning often require consumer (PLWH) participation/collaboration/consensus building. The value of consumer input in planning/evaluating HIV services (e. g., Ryan White C.A.R.E. Act. Titles I/II) can be realized by provider willingness to create parity through empowerment of consumers. Consumer, and provider apprehension is overcome as sensitivity to multicultural issues and the intrinsic value of this partnership emerge.

SETTING: Achieving parity of PLWH (consumers) with consideration of specific urban, suburban and rural issues takes place through technical assistance (TA) provided by public health and grass roots merged efforts directed toward Title Consortia, community planning bodies and other agencies in an effort to impact prevention efforts in the community at large.

PROJECT: Several successful methods were developed to recruit/retain PLWH in HIV prevention activities: (1) focus groups; (2) Needs Assessments (detach recruitment form); (3) Co-Chair appointment; (4) meals; (5) reimbursement; for travel/loss of wages; (6) orientation (mentor) program; (7) empowerment; sessions to affected communities from organized leadership utilizing life experience of PLWH and public health resources; (8) mutually supportive relationship with grass roots consumer advisory group.

RESULTS: The Dutchess Co. Dept. Health (DCDOH) with Network Positive Action (N/PA) enabled participation (reflective of local epidemic) in all aspects of HIV prevention, linked also to health and human services, e.g., primary and secondary prevention, outreach, counseling/testing vaccine clinical, research. N/PA, reaches traditionally underserved disenfranchised hard to reach population.

LESSONS: Parity, collaboration and consensus are achievable with PLWH peer driven support. Minimal funding/resources result in huge dividends via self-determination. We advocate for support of consumer in HIV prevention/health services.

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